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ABSTRACT

Students will combine reading with descriptive writing in this lesson plan. Embedded in this project are skills, such as compiling, composing, defining, describing, illustrating, rewriting, and validating. During nine 30-minute sessions, students will: read and discuss "The Giver" by Lois Lowry in order to create meaning from the text; read short (or sections of) biographies/autobiographies/memoirs and answer both technical and comprehension questions in order to understand the difference between a biography/autobiography/memoir; view a biography on video for further comparison and contrast; use computer search engines to research events that happened on the day they were born to gain understanding of the importance of a written history; select pertinent facts that construct meaning for them based on research, prior knowledge, and life experiences; summarize the information they have selected in the chart provided; reflect, in expository writing mode, on the information they have selected; and compile a list of events in their lives by interviewing. The instructional plan, lists of resources, student assessment/reflection activities, and a list of National Council of Teachers of English/International Reading Association (NCTE/IRA) Standards addressed in the lesson are included. A worksheet on American Memory; a data chart; a memoir booklet information sheet; a personal memoir rubric; a peer editing worksheet; a peer rating scale; and a self-revision worksheet are attached. (PM)

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Memories Matter: The Giver and Descriptive Writing Memoirs

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Grade Band

6-8

Estimated Lesson Time

Nine 30-minute Class Sessions

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Overview

This lesson provides students with a scaffold for creating meaning from text, and cements their understanding of textual analysis. By discussing the importance of having a written history of humanity, and the ways in which prior knowledge and life experiences influence others, students soon realize the horror of Jonas's utopian society. This understanding generates a keen interest in the descriptive writing of students' own history.

From Theory to Practice

Atwell, Nancie. 1998. *In the Middle: New Understanding About Writing, Reading, and Learning.* Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.

- Writing memoirs teaches students to recognize and explore moments on the way to growing up and becoming oneself—both good moments and bad ones. It purifies the essence of an experience through both what a writer includes and what a write excludes. It allows students to discover and tell their own truths as writers (372).
- Memoir writing allows students to look for the past and create meaning from it. In addition, it gives the writer, and the reader, perspective about events in their lives (372).

Vacca, Richard T. and Jo Anne L. Vacca. 1999. *Content Area Reading: Literacy and Learning Across the Curriculum.* Longman, New York: Allyn & Bacon.

- Reading and writing are both acts of composition because readers and writers are involved in an evolving process of constructing meaning. The combination of reading and writing in a classroom improves both achievement and instructional efficiency (260-261).
- Students who experience the integration of writing and reading are likely to learn more content, to understand it better, and to remember it longer. This is the case because writing, before or after reading, promotes thinking, but in different ways (262).

Student Objectives

Students will

- read and discuss *The Giver* by Lois Lowry in order to create meaning from the text.
- read short (or sections of) biographies/autobiographies/memoirs and answer both technical and comprehension questions in order to understand the difference between a

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biography/autobiography/memoir.

- view a biography on video for further comparison and contrast.
- use computer search engines to research events that happened on the day they were born to gain understanding of the importance of a written history.
- select pertinent facts that construct meaning for them based on research, prior knowledge, and life experiences.
- summarize the information they have selected in the chart provided.
- reflect, in expository writing mode, on the information they have selected.
- compile a list of events in their lives by interviewing.

Resources

- American Memory Student Activity
- Memoir Booklet Information Sheet
- Memoir Booklet Rubric
- Peer Editing Worksheet
- Peer Presentation Rating Scale
- Self Revision Worksheet
- American History Web Site
- Bluegrass Writing Project Web Site
- Biography Web Site
- Inkspell Web Site
- Ken Goldstein Web Site

Instructional Plan

Resources

1. American History Web Site
2. Memoir Writing Web sites: The Bluegrass Writing Project, Biography, Inkspell, and/or Ken Goldstein
3. "Profile of a Writer: Agatha Christie, How did she do it?" HomeVision, 1986, 50 minutes.

Instruction and Activities

1. Begin reading *The Giver*, by Lois Lowry. (Students will be ready to begin writing once Jonas reaches "The Ceremony of Twelves" or begins receiving memories from *The Giver*).
2. While reading the book, find and share examples of biographies, autobiographies, and memoirs so that students can compare and contrast the styles in which each is written.
3. Examine the "American History" Web site so that you are familiar with the way in which it works. Copy the corresponding reproducible.
4. Have students visit the "American History" Web site and complete the corresponding reproducible. It gets them thinking about history and how it relates to *The Giver*, in addition to thinking about their prior knowledge and personal experiences.
5. Copy all handouts, distribute, and discuss. Reviewing the end result before beginning allows students to reach their goal by seeing the "big picture."
    - Memoir Booklet Information Sheet
    - American Memory Student Activity
    - Peer Editing Worksheet
    - Self-Revision Worksheet

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- Peer Rating Scale for Presentation
- Grading Rubric

6. Teach a mini-lesson on interviewing techniques and have students conduct interviews with relatives, family friends, and neighbors who might have vignettes about the students' own histories to share.
7. Have students analyze conducted interviews for those "snapshot" memories that have changed their lives in some way.
8. Get parental permission to locate photographs that can be cut for a timeline. (Symbolic pictures from magazines or student illustrations are fine for those students who are not granted permission to cut up photographs.)
9. Create and share photographic timelines, then post them around the room so that everyone can find inspiration for his/her own writing.
10. Begin writing descriptive memoirs at the rate of approximately one every other day. Be prepared—you will have first drafts, second drafts, peer editing, self-revision, and final drafts of different topics to contend with at the same time.
11. When memoir writing is complete, have students write the expository foreword.
12. Finalize and publish memoir booklets.
13. Recruit parent helpers to head up Memoir Presentation Party committees: food, decorations, background music, invitations, clean up, etc. (**HINT:** do not serve food until all memoirs have been shared.)
14. Invite a varied audience: principals, nurses, maintenance technicians, librarians, guidance counselors, bookkeepers, PTO/PTA members, board members, etc.
15. Host "Memories Matter" party.
16. During party, have each student peer-review two of their peers' presentations.
17. **NOTE:** The presentation format may have to be modified for schools not on a modified block schedule.

Web Resources

American History
http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/today/today.html
American History Web site for corresponding activity

Bluegrass Writing Project
http://www.bgwp.org/projects.htm
Resource list of memoirs

Biography
http://www.biography.com/
Biographical excerpts

Inkspell
http://www.inkspell.homestead.com/memoir.html
Resource list of memoirs with some direct links. . .

Ken Goldstein
http://www.kengoldstein.net/Memoirs/index.html
Memoir excerpts of Ken Goldstein, writer

Student Assessment/Reflections

Students will choose, under the teacher's guidance, nine of the twelve memoirs they've written to compile in a "Memoir Booklet," which will be presented to an audience including parents, administrators, administrative assistants, guidance counselors, and maintenance staff, as well as their peers. Each student will choose one memoir to share with the class, but all will share the expository dedication. The dedication page includes reason why person to whom dedication is made was chosen, and the connection student made between *The Giver* and writing their own memoirs. After all memoirs have been shared,

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guests move around the room in order to examine memoir booklets more closely.

The entire process is graded on the attached rubric, which is given to students as soon as the project begins (around the time readers come to the "Ceremony of Twelves" in *The Giver*).

NCTE/IRA Standards

3 - Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

4 - Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

5 - Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

6 - Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts.

7 - Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and nonprint texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

8 - Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

11 - Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

12 - Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

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AMERICAN MEMORY

In The Giver, all knowledge of the experiences of humanity have been given to the Receiver of Memory so that no citizen of the Community will be "burdened" with the past. However, if a situation arises with which the community has not previously dealt, citizens do not know how to deal with it, since they have no past experiences to guide them. Where do they go? They go to the Receiver of Memory for advice.

But in today's world, we are fortunate to have records, both oral and written, of our past. In other words, we have **history**! This activity will help you personalize your history.

DIRECTIONS

PART ONE:
- Go to the American Memory Website at http://rs6.loc.gov/
- Click on "American Memory."
- Click on "Today in History" (at the top right side of the screen).
- Read the article and fill in the first column on your data chart.

PART TWO:
- Click on "Yesterday."
- Read the article and fill in the second column on your data chart.

PART THREE:
- Click on "Archive."
- Select your birth month.
- Select your birthday.
- Click on "Go."
- Read the article and fill in the third column in your data chart.

Under the "reflections" section on the corresponding worksheet, explain why it is important to remember the events you have recorded. What might happen if future generations had no knowledge of these events?

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Name _____

DATA CHART: MY AMERICAN HISTORY

TODAY IN HISTORY	YESTERDAY IN HISTORY	YOUR BIRTHDAY IN HISTORY
DATE:	DATE:	DATE:
EVENT:	EVENT:	EVENT:
FACT 1:	FACT 1:	FACT 1:
FACT 2:	FACT 2:	FACT 2:
FACT 3:	FACT 3:	FACT 3:
FACT 4:	FACT 4:	FACT 4:
FACT 5:	FACT 5:	FACT 5:
REFLECTIONS:	REFLECTIONS:	REFLECTIONS:

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MEMOIR BOOKLET INFORMATION SHEET

Memoir writing is a compilation of snapshot memories, like those the Giver shares with Jonas. Snapshot memories are fairly short and very specific. Each memoir is rich in detail and description. It differs from writing an autobiography, in which where you start with the day you were born and tell everything that has happened since then. It also differs from a biography in that the person telling the story of the event is the person who actually experienced it, rather than someone observing the action. In other words, there is no bias in the writing except that of the person who took part in the event. An important part of memoir writing is the author's stated or implied message about why a memory is important enough to share. In other words, it answers the question, "What difference does it make?"

We will be writing our own memoirs. The "snapshot" memories you choose must be important enough to be shared with our Giver, if we had one. They are memories you would want to pass down to generations of Givers.

We will write about all of the memoir subjects listed below in descriptive mode: action verbs in the present tense, sensory detail, and figurative language. You will bring the memory to life by writing about it in "real time," as if you are in the moment. In addition, the style of each memoir must mirror that of Lowry. We will examine carefully the part of The Giver that detail the passing of memories from the Giver to Jonas. In the end you will choose, with my guidance, nine entries you want to include in your final booklet.

Categories

- Name stories (See explanation below.)
- "Where I grew up" stories
- Love stories (first love, true love, end of love, etc.)
- Pain stories (someone hurt you, argument with best friend or parents, etc.)
- First day of school stories
- Rites of passage/realizing you are growing up stories
- Weather stories (tornadoes, hurricanes, thunderstorms, etc.)
- Holiday Stories (traditions, memorable ones, when you found out there was no Santa Claus, etc.)
- Physical Hurt stories (broken bones, stitches, surgeries, bee stings, etc.)
- First-time-I... stories
- Funny family stories (Those your mother always tells at gatherings.)
- "Caught ya'!" stories (lying, cheating, writing a love letter, etc.)

To begin, we will create a Pictorial Timeline that will help you write about specific times in your life. (You will need 10-15 pictures of times in your life that are important to you. GET YOUR PARENT'S/GUARDIAN'S PERMISSION because we will be cutting and gluing these pictures.) We will brainstorm 10-15 important moments in your life and create a time line of those events using photographs, magazine cutouts, or drawings. All moments must be identified by a picture, date, and caption. We will post our timelines around the room so that everyone can use them for inspiration.

Next, we will brainstorm memories and feelings associated with your name. Prior to this activity, ask your parents/guardians about your name. "Why was I given this name? Where did it come from? What does it mean?" You will then conduct formal research about the origins of your name and its meanings.

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The final project will be out of 210 points, but you will also earn points for class activities along the way. As we work on our memoirs, keep The Giver in mind, and what we are learning about the importance of memories to our families, our communities, our world and ourselves.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS:

Portfolio cover:

- Creative rendering of your first name
- Six to eight statements about your name provided (gathered from the formal and informal research you've conducted)
- Title of Portfolio
- Your last name and the date of completion
- Illustrations, pictures, or drawings that correspond to the themes shared between this project and Lois Lowry's The Giver.

Foreword:

- Place directly behind portfolio cover, before Table of Contents
- Expository Mode of Writing: statement, reason, example, explanation, example, explanation, "what difference does it make?"
- Include an explanation of the following:
    - Identify the person (or people) to whom you are dedicating your Memoirs
    - Explain why you chose this person (or people) to honor with the dedication
    - Summarize what you will "take away" from the entire project (In what ways have you been enriched by this project, and in what ways will it have a lasting impact on you?)
    - Draw conclusions between your memoir project and themes in The Giver by Lois Lowry

Table of Contents page:

- Place directly behind Foreword in booklet
- Format it exactly like those in your language arts binder
- Example: The First Time I Got Caught Swearing 5

Entries

- At least six of the nine entries must be illustrated in a manner that shows their relationship to the themes shared between our personal memoirs and The Giver.
- Illustrations may be drawings, pictures, clip art, magazine clippings, border decorations, etc.

Writing process:

- Turn in all drafts of each piece
- Staple all peer and self editing and revision sheets to the entries with which they correspond
- Organize drafts and editing/revision forms in the order in which they appear in the portfolio, with the entries that did not make it into the book at the back of the packet
- Clip packet with a binder clip and file in your writing portfolio folder.

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PERSONAL MEMOIR RUBRIC

	4 – Le Brea Tar Pits	6 – Local Library's Shelf	8 – School Library	10 – New York Times' Best Seller
Required Elements (x2)	Some required elements present	All required elements present but not according to specifications	All required elements completed according to specifications	All required elements completed according to specifications and presented in a cohesive manner that shows synthesis of entire project
	No foreword	Foreword covers the required elements but not in expository mode	Foreword covers the required elements in expository mode	Foreword covers the required elements in expository mode and expresses them in a meaningful way
	Includes one to four of the required entries	Includes five to eight of the required entries	Includes all nine of the required entries	All nine required entries included and chosen for their relevance to your personal character today
(This section includes elements related to the writing process.)	Few required elements turned in on time	Some required elements turned in on time	Most required elements turned in on time	All required elements turned in on time
Descriptive Entries (x3)	Include few of the required elements for the mode	Include adequate sensory detail, action verbs in the present tense, and figurative language, in a manner that indicates comprehension of the assignment and subject matter	Include relevant sensory detail, action verbs in the present tense, and figurative language, in a manner that indicates synthesis of the assignment and subject matter	Include relevant sensory detail, action verbs in the present tense, and figurative language, in a manner that indicates synthesis of the assignment and subject matter, as well as a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between The Giver and the memoir writing project
Writing Process (x2)	No rough or revised drafts	Some rough and revised drafts	Rough and revised drafts for all entries	Rough and significantly revised drafts for each entry
Peer Editing	No peer edits	Some peer edits	All pieces peer edited	All pieces peer edited and peer editing shows understanding of the writing process and its usefulness

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Self-Revision	No self-revision worksheets	Some self-revision worksheets	All pieces have self-revision worksheets	All pieces have self-revision worksheets attached and worksheets indicate understanding of the writing process and its usefulness
Symbolism & Theme (x2)	None of the entries have illustrations	Some of the entries have illustrations, but those illustrations show little conception of project's themes	All entries have illustrations that exhibit comprehension of project's themes	All entries have illustrations that exhibit synthesis of project's themes
Presentation (x2)	No presentation	Presentation shows inadequate understanding of unit	Presentation shows satisfactory understanding of unit	Presentation shows mastery of unit and additional understanding of the concept as a whole
	Presenter reads from the Handbook and is unfamiliar with content	Presenter reads from the Handbook the majority of the time, and does so in a matter-of-fact manner	Presenter shares memoir without having to refer to Handbook, but does so in a matter-of-fact manner	Presenter shares Handbook in a manner indicative of good storytelling and Lowry's style of descriptive writing
	Presenter does not articulate clearly and is difficult to understand	Presenter speaks clearly but softly and cannot be heard very well -- is not comfortable with material.	Presenter speaks clearly and loudly enough to be heard anywhere in the room and is comfortable with the material	Presenter speaks clearly and loudly enough to be heard anywhere in the room, is comfortable with the material, and engages the audience
	No presentation rating scales completed	One presentation rating scale completed	Both presentation rating scales completed	Both presentation rating scales completed with obvious knowledge of presentation skills and the presenters abilities

TOTAL: _____/210

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Writer's Name _____ Editor's Name _____

PEER EDITING WORKSHEET FOR MEMOIRS

1. The names of the people involved in the memory, and their relationship to the author are clear to the audience.
   Names & relationships: _____

2. The subject of the memory is clear to the audience, as is the importance of it to the author.
   Subject & importance: _____

3. It is clear when and where the memory took place, as well as why the event happened.
   "When": _____
   "Where": _____
   "Why": _____

4. Descriptive Mode:

• Action verbs in the present tense	Yes	No
• Figurative language	Yes	No
• Sensory detail used	Yes	No
• Sensory detail used appropriately[1]	Yes	No
• Interesting hook	Yes	No
• Well-developed	Yes	No
• Strong closing	Yes	No
• I made suggested changes in spelling.	Yes	No
• I made suggested changes in mechanics such as verb tense, subject/verb agreement, and word choice.	Yes	No
• I made suggested changes in sentence structure.	Yes	No

What I liked best about your memoir is? (Be specific!)

An area of weakness you need to work on is? (Be specific!)

*****THE EDITOR RECEIVES POINTS FOR COMPLETENESS AND DETAIL!**

[1] (In other words, if you are writing a memory about getting a new puppy, we don't need to know what the puppy tasted like.)

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Your Name _____

MEMOIR PRESENTATIONS PEER RATING SCALE

Please rate each category on a scale from 1-10 where 1 is the lowest score possible, and 10 is the highest score possible.

Peer #1 Name _____

_____ Presenter grabs the audience's attention as soon as you take the "stage"
_____ Presenter stands tall and straight; does not "sway" back and forth
_____ Presenter's volume is loud enough to hear Memoir clearly
_____ Presenter varies tone of voice to hold listeners' interest
_____ Presenter's pronunciation is clear
_____ Presenter's delivery is sincere
_____ Presenter effectively incorporates gestures to make important points
_____ Presenter makes eye contact with audience
_____ Presenter controls nervousness so that it is not noticeable to audience

Peer #2 Name _____

_____ Presenter grabs the audience's attention as soon as you take the "stage"
_____ Presenter stands tall and straight; does not "sway" back and forth
_____ Presenter's volume is loud enough to hear Memoir clearly
_____ Presenter varies tone of voice to hold listeners' interest
_____ Presenter's pronunciation is clear
_____ Presenter's delivery is sincere
_____ Presenter effectively incorporates gestures to make important points
_____ Presenter makes eye contact with audience
_____ Presenter controls nervousness so that it is not noticeable to audience

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Name _____ Title of Piece Revised _____

SELF-REVISION WORKSHEET FOR MEMOIRS

1. I told the names of the people involved in my memory.
   List their names: _____
2. I told what the subject of my story is. (Example: I got caught sneaking out.)
   List the subject: _____
3. I told when the story takes place.
   List "when" here: _____

Choose one of these methods of "time":

a) Day (Monday, Tuesday, etc.) _____
b) Time (12:00, late afternoon, etc.) _____
c) Season (spring, fall) _____
d) Other (specify) _____ _____

4. I told where the story takes place.
   List "where" here: _____
5. I told why this memory is special to me.
   List "why" here: _____
6. I described what happened in five or more sentences. YES NO
7. I described what happened using at least three of the five senses, and used them appropriately. Circle the senses you used:

   see hear taste touch smell

8. My story has an interesting hook.
   List it here: _____

   _____
9. My story has a strong resolution.
   List it here: _____

   _____
10. My Descriptive Writing
    - Utilizes action verbs in the present tense (underline in blue) YES NO
    - Includes figurative language (underline in red) YES NO
    - Incorporates sensory detail appropriately YES NO
    - Does NOT revert to narrative mode YES NO
    - Relates the event as if it is occurring RIGHT NOW YES NO

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